

**TESTIMONY - MARCH 6, 2012 - AT 11 AM (HIGHER ED)**

HELLO, MY NAME IS THOMAS PHILLIPS, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF CAPITAL WORKFORCE PARTNERS – THE NORTH CENTRAL CONNECTICUT WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD – ONE OF THE STATE’S FIVE WORKFORCE BOARDS.

A KEY LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY OF CAPITAL WORKFORCE PARTNERS EACH YEAR IS THE SUPPORT FOR **SUMMER AND YEAR-ROUND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT**. WE DO THIS EACH YEAR, BECAUSE WE RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING A CONTINUUM OF WORK BASED EXPERIENCES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, AND TO TRY TO ENGAGE AS MANY YOUTH AS POSSIBLE IN THESE OPPORTUNITIES, NOT JUST FOR THEM, BUT FOR THE ECONOMIC HEALTH FOR THE REGION AND STATE. LITTLE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN OUR FUTURE WORKFORCE.

WE ARE TREMENDOUSLY THANKFUL FOR THE \$3,500,000 THAT HAS REMAINED IN THE GOVERNOR’S PROPOSED BUDGET TO CONTINUE ADDRESSING THE HIGH DEMAND FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN CONNECTICUT’S FIVE WORKFORCE REGIONS.

LAST SUMMER, THE BOARDS, ALONG WITH THEIR PARTNERS, WERE ABLE TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OVER 4,300 YOUNG PEOPLE, AGES 14 TO 19 YEARS, USING STATE, MUNICIPAL AND LEVERAGED FOUNDATION FUNDS THAT TARGET MOSTLY OUR DISTRESSED URBAN, SUBURBAN AND RURAL COMMUNITIES.

WE ARE HERE TODAY, TO SUPPORT SB 291 – AN ACT ESTABLISHING A YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM. LAST MONTH, THE SELECT COMMISSION ON CHILDREN CONDUCTED A WELL ATTENDED FORUM – FACING THE CHALLENGES OF THE GREAT NEW DEPRESSION – AN IN DEPTH REVIEW OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN OUR STATE. THE CONCLUSION OF THAT EVENT WAS THAT WE NEED TO DO FAR MORE TO SECURE SUSTAINABLE IMPROVEMENT. WE NEED A MORE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH THAT WILL CREATE LASTING CHANGE.

WHILE THE STATE’S INVESTMENT HELPED PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OVER 4,300 YOUTHS , THE BOARDS STILL HAD TO TURN AWAY 5,700 INDIVIDUALS WHO MADE THE EFFORT TO APPLY FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO WORK.

**SB 291 ASKS FOR CONSIDERATION OF A TAX CREDIT THAT COULD BE PROVIDED TO BUSINESSES THAT CHOOSE TO HIRE A YOUTH FOR THE SUMMER OR BEYOND, AND ALSO PAY THEIR WAGES.**

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IN LINE WITH THAT APPROACH, CAPITAL WORKFORCE PARTNERS HAS ALREADY TAKEN A PROACTIVE STEP TO ENGAGE THE MAYORS OF ITS REGION'S LARGEST CITIES – TO HIRE A YOUTH WITH NO SUBSIDY. WE FEEL THIS IS AN IMPERATIVE TO HELP CLOSE THE GAP OF THOSE YOUNG PEOPLE WE NEED TO TURN AWAY EACH YEAR. AS YOU MIGHT EXPECT, THIS CAMPAIGN IS SLOW IN SIGNING UP EMPLOYERS AS THERE IS LITTLE DIRECT INCENTIVE FOR THEM TO DO SO.

- THIS HAS TO CHANGE. PRESENTLY THE YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS IN CONNECTICUT'S URBAN AREAS ARE THE WORST THEY HAVE BEEN SINCE THE GREAT DEPRESSION ERA. AND WE KEEP LOSING TIME THAT COULD BE WORKING TOWARD SYSTEMIC CHANGE.

MOST OF ALL, WE WANT TO REDUCE OUR WAITING LISTS AND ENGAGE MORE YOUTH IN MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES – ALLOWING THEM TO MATURE INTO THE FUTURE WORKFORCE WE WILL NEED IN THE YEARS AHEAD. OUR STATE'S EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM HAS PROVEN – EACH YEAR MORE STUDENTS WHO HAVE A WORK OPPORTUNITY IN THIS PROGRAM GO BACK TO SCHOOL, MOVE ON TO THE NEXT GRADE OR GRADUATE.

SB 291 GOES BEYOND YEAR-TO-YEAR FUNDING REQUESTS FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT – IT OFFERS A THREAD THAT CAN SEW TOGETHER MORE COMPREHENSIVE CHANGE IN THE WAY WE NURTURE OUR YOUNG TALENT PIPELINE, TO HELP CONNECTICUT BUSINESSES BE AS COMPETITIVE AS THEY CAN BE IN THE YEARS AHEAD.

WE ARE CURRENTLY FACED WITH AN IMPENDING WORKFORCE SHORTAGE, A WORKFORCE WITH DECLINING SKILLS, AN AGING POPULATION AND A TROUBLING FUTURE. WE CAN'T AFFORD NOT TO SUPPORT SB 291.



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